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Media, Advertising & the Artist's Response

Twenty-first century humans are super-saturated with advertisements. Print media, billboards, television, radio and the internet constantly bombard viewers with images (and sounds and text) designed to seduce and sell. These advertising and information distribution platforms transform viewers into consumers. Much of our contemporary cultural environments are constructed as primarily channels to sell things. We live in a branded world; various screens tell us what to buy, magazines distribute content by means of advertising, and the difference between the news and the marketing campaign is difficult to gauge. This paper will look at how a conscientious person might orient herself to this cultural environment, and will examine possible strategies to respond to and reclaim some of her mental space that the media and advertisers have so relentlessly staked out for themselves.

The type of media and advertisement-saturated world we find ourselves in is not new. Marshall McLuhan's 1951 text *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man* recognized the new mental and cultural environment produced by advertising, entertainment and media; the text sought to indicate the strategies and aims that the emerging big media employed to sell things. McLuhan hoped to reverse some of the process and effects that advertising had on mid 20th century American minds. Similarly, Guy Debord's 1967 *The Society of the Spectacle* critiqued how late Capitalism produces a type of culture that sells itself by mediated re-presentations of itself through advertisements, media and images. The type of culture described in his work produces commodity fetishism; it splits the real and the imaged as the Spectacle juggernaut consumes and re-presents everything it encounters. After discussing McLuhan and Debord's

projects, I will offer a few contemporary strategies that proffer to counter and subvert the all-consuming and encompassing media monster.

One of the broad realizations of my research is that advertising and media has overpowered so much of our cultural transactions, dominated our private and public spaces, and consumed our mental and inter / intra-personal relationships, and that these effects of media and advertising are not strictly “new” or conditions of recent or “contemporary” society. Critics and writers have commented on this type of media and advertising saturation for three quarters of a century. Christine Harold quotes Paris art critic Louis Chaeronea, speaking in 1927:

Advertising is in some way an elastic gas, diffuse, perceptible to all our organs...But we have not been aware of its beauty, latent, profound, scattered, spontaneous...The first domain of Advertising was the street...Now it surrounds us, envelops us, it is intimately mingled with our every step, in our activities, in our relaxation, and its “atmospheric pressure” is so necessary to us that we no longer feel it (*Ourspace* 34).

Chaeronea finds himself in the advertised world like the fish that notices the ocean for the first time; the fish swims in its aquatic environment as 20th century humans swim in their advertised environments. Similarly, twenty years later, McLuhan quotes a 1947 *Fortune* magazine editorial:

The American Citizen lives in a state of siege from dawn till bedtime. Nearly everything he sees, hears, tastes, touches, and smells is an attempt to sell him something. Luckily for his sanity he becomes calloused shortly after diaper-hood; now, to break through his projective shell, the advertisers must continuously shock, tease, tickle, or irritate him, or wear him down by the drip-drip-drip or Chinese water-torture method of endless repetition. Advertising is the handwriting on the wall, the sign in the sky, the bush that burns regularly every night. No place on earth is geographically beyond the reach of the hawkers and hucksters; the only oases of peace ... are the darkened sickrooms of the dying where the customer is not worth bothering... (*The Mechanical Bride*, 88).

Both Chaeronea the art critic and the *Fortune* editor describe the very world itself as being enveloped by advertising; our culturally constructed environments, our city walls, the newspapers we read in the morning, the radios that take us to and from work in our cars, the

buildings dressed in billboards and marquis, and our food packaged and branded all present themselves to the world dressed in images and designs to sell themselves. The world comes to us *branded*, and these brandings appear “natural” in the sense that they are products of the world. We forget that they are constructed by people. The advertisements and media packaging appear as both constructed and natural. McLuhan again describes the issue, along with outlining his strategy for pushing against the advertised world:

Ours is the first age in which many thousands of the best-trained individual minds have made it a full-time business to get inside the collective public mind. To get inside in order to manipulate, exploit, control is the object now...To keep everybody in the helpless state engendered by prolonged mental rutting is the effect of many ads and much entertainment alike. Since so many minds are engaged in bringing about this condition of public helplessness, and since these programs of commercial education are so much more expensive and influential than the relatively puny offerings sponsored by schools and colleges, it seemed fitting to devise a method for reversing the process. Why not use the new commercial education as a means to enlightening its intended prey? Why not assist the public to observe consciously the drama which is intended to operate upon it unconsciously? (1951 v).

The point here is that while the advertised world *seems* to be a natural product of the world, it is in fact produced by man. Advertisers and “marketing men” mask their efforts by constructing totalizing environments. The advertised world is so pervasive that the distinctions between culture and nature, between constructed and spontaneously generated break down. Our streets are covered in billboards and commercial signage, our homes are filled with magazines and print ads, our emails and computer screens blink with advertisements.

When all parts of one’s world are essentially products, how does one begin to react against the advertised world? McLuhan believes that a rigorous analysis of various advertisements and media artifacts will begin to remove the commercial grime from his readers’ eyes. Media is *created* by people even as it comes to us as part of *the world*. Advertising is the

stage, the setting, the room that we find ourselves in, but it is also a room that man has made himself.

The advertised world has produced docile, exploited, “rutting” consumers where McLuhan would like active, reflective and creative thinkers. However, McLuhan is not trying to dismantle, attack, or fight against the media assault head on. The media beast is too powerful; rather, he advocates a type of ironic, critical awareness and detachment that (hopefully) leads to a greater understanding of how that environment changes its viewers (consumers). Where do these advertisers find the “original sources” or “inspiration” for their copy? What truths and mistruths are implicit and explicit in their messages? What sorts of people are produced and reproduce these types of cultural artifacts?

McLuhan outlines how media in general productively change their users in his 1967 *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*:

All media work us over completely. They are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered. The medium is the message. Any understanding of social and cultural change is impossible without a knowledge of the way media work as environments (1967 26).

The media-built environment is a totality. However, why should we rally against and push back with such force against the media machine? Perhaps trading our social and private spaces to advertisers in exchange for better standards of living, more convenient consumer products, and a never ending supply of new and exciting goods is fair. Further, if the daily assault on our senses by advertisements is to blame, perhaps rejecting the system outright is not the solution, but instead regulating *what* the advertisers are saying is more appropriate. We ought to be more concerned with eliminating lies and mistruths from advertising; we should worry about the message of advertisers instead of the various pervasive medias they employ.

The strength of McLuhan's project is that it demonstrates many previously unnoticed facets of the media environment. Deciding whether or not being advertised from sun-up to sundown is "good" or "bad" is not really McLuhan's aim. Rather, he desires illuminate that such a process is happening; he wants to point out the various tactics and strategies that advertisers use not only to persuade us to buy their products, but how such persuasions seep into every other part of our lives. We begin to internalize the advertisement's underlying assumptions. Suddenly we begin to think of ourselves and our relationships as being *part of* the advertisers game.

The other criticism, that we should regulate or critique the message instead of the total environment (the media), is handled by Tom Wolfe in "What if he is right?" (in *The Pump House Gang*) Wolfe summarizes McLuhan's theory thus (emphasis mine):

The new technologies of the electronic age, notably television, radio, the telephone, and computers, make up a new environment. A new environment; they are not merely added to some basic human environment. The idea that these things, TV and the rest, are just tools that men can use for better or worse depending on their talents and moral strength-that idea is idiotic to McLuhan. The new technologies, such as television, have become a new environment. They radically alter the entire way people use their five senses, the way they react to things, and therefore, their entire lives and the entire society. **It doesn't matter what the content of a medium like TV is. It doesn't matter if the networks show twenty hours a day of sadistic cowboys caving in people's teeth or twenty hours of Pablo Casals droning away on his cello in a pure-culture white Spanish drawing room. It doesn't matter about the content.** The most profound effect of television-its real "message," in McLuhan's terms -is the way it alters men's sensory patterns. The medium is the message-that is the best known McLuhanism.

Just as the television or radio completely transform the human environment, wrapping viewers and listeners up in an electronic, always on envelope, so advertising in general completely transforms the human environment. The advertised world casts all relationships among humans and their world as transactions between goods and money, between buying things and being sold things. In a televised world, everything potentially is projected, everything is potentially on a

screen; in an advertised world everything is for sale, everything is selling you something and derives its worth from being bought and sold.

This last point is extended when we look at Christine Harold's analysis in her chapter "The Brand Politics of Consuming Publics." The author argues that no longer are corporations simply selling products or tangible goods, but are rather in the business of selling brands. She explains, quoting Naomi Klein's *No Logo*, that in the late stages of capitalism in the 1980s big brands like Nike, Microsoft and Tommy Hilfiger no longer made things, "but *images* of their brands. Their real work lay not in manufacturing but in marketing" (xix). Further she explains how "the referential link between brands and their products is becoming dislodged. In a very real way, products are the *vehicles* that deliver their brands to consumers, rather than vice versa" (xxii). Brands are now emotional products; a company like Nike is not selling shoes, but rather a carefully crafted, subjective experience — a totally encompassing narrative of what it is like to own a Nike shoe. Marketers and brand managers are selling experiences; these types of experiences can only be consumed by buying their particular products. McLuhan recognized this in a 1966 CBC interview:

Do you know that most people read ads about things they already own? They don't read things to buy them but to feel reassured that they have already bought the right thing. In other words, they get huge information satisfaction from ads far more than they do from the product itself. Where advertising is heading is quite simply into a world where the ad will become a substitute for the product and all the satisfaction will be derived informationally from the ad and the product will be merely a number in some file somewhere (quoted from Benedetti, 162).

Consumers are not really interested in owning things, but rather in owning the mental narrative of them owning things. They desire, and purchase, images.

It is not simply a matter of whether advertising wears products or products wear advertisements. Instead what we are seeing is a collapse of the media and the message into a type

of singularity. The scheme / content division that separates logos and brands on the one hand and products and goods on the other ceases to be an adequate model for describing late capitalism's effects on consumers.

The Mechanical Bride offers dozens of (then) contemporary popular culture artifacts that McLuhan arranges as "exhibitions;" he casts his net wide to include advertisements, newspaper front pages, comic strips and pulp-fiction materials. He reproduces about sixty of these artifacts and offers for each a few pages of riffing commentary and criticism that probe and question the material in an attempt to wake up the passive consumer from her somnambulistic wandering. His project is peppered with puns, aphorisms and pop-culture allusions that a contemporary reader might have difficulty following. He counters the advertising machine by mimicking the same peppy "voice" that the marketing men use to sell their dish soaps, nylon stockings, ironing boards, fizzy drinks and Buicks.

I will briefly describe a few examples from *The Mechanical Bride*. The most interesting "exhibits" are those ads that promote media and advertising itself. For example, McLuhan offers a print ad for *Time Magazine* placed in *Life Magazine*. The ad has a photograph of a news reporter barreling out of a saloon, putting his hat on his head, with a rolled up newspaper in one pocket and his eyes gazing out into the world heroically looking for news. The ad's headline is "A nose for news—and a stomach for whiskey." The photograph and headline are accompanied by a large amount of copy that describes the honest newsman as a dying breed, whose hard drinking is only surpassed by his hard nose for the facts. The copy likens *Time's* dedication to its readership as that of the old-fashioned newspaper reporter's similar dedication to the cold, hard facts (9).

Another ad that is selling media through media is brought to us by the Radio Corporation of America. This ad is titled "Freedom to LISTEN – Freedom to LOOK." The ad presents a

photograph of a Norman Rockwell type prairie family sitting around the kitchen table listening to the radio. Father has his pipe in hand, Mother is mending a garment, and junior and his brother are working on school assignments. All four have their heads cocked and are listening intently to the radio. The ad comes about at a time when television was emerging as a real competitor to radio; the Radio Corporation of America is aligning itself to the American values of freedom of information. That is, the RCA is telling its print ad viewers that they can listen, they can look, or they can choose to do neither. Of course, the RCA has vested interests in the families across America as being *only* radio listeners. McLuhan points out that the “freedoms” the ad promises are basically the freedom to shut up and listen (20).

Next, McLuhan reproduces a Kodak Business Films ad that promises to “Dramatize your sales story...with films.” The print ad’s photo depicts a model in a bubble bath on-screen, with a trio of silhouetted female viewers watching the show. The ad’s copy says:

For film and films alone enable you to tell your sales story within an absorbing plot - with the impact of pictures....color...action...sound. A story that has showmanship—that *sells*.With more and more products competing for attention, you need a selling medium with dramatic impact—films. And films are ready. Production, projection, and distribution technics were never better...and a commercial film producer is ready to help. Call him in...soon (89).

The ad is selling advertisements to business. It also is making its viewers nervous that electronic, technological innovation (and sales!) are speeding past him. Earlier in the text, McLuhan quotes “a film expert, speaking of the value of the movie medium for selling North to South America.” The gist of the film expert’s statement works just as well for Kodak’s business films: “The propaganda value of this simultaneous audio-visual impression is very high, for it standardizes thought by supplying the spectator with a ready-made visual image before he has time to conjure up an interpretation of his own” (vi). The advertiser is literally beaming messages of its products into the minds of its viewers. In the Kodak film example, advertising is not simply selling a

product like soap, soft drinks, or shoes, but it is selling itself. It is using ready made images to sell itself.

Finally, McLuhan selects an ad for “The Nielsen Audimeter” in a chapter he titles “Market Research.” The audimeter is a “graphic recording instrument installed in a radio receiver in a scientifically selected radio home. By recording every twist of the dial, every minute of the day or night, the Audimeter obtains precious radio data not available through any other means” (48). The ad shows a photograph of the machine with its outer casing removed to present the viewer with a view of all of the intricate internal machinery and mechanisms. Below is a domestic shot of a grandmother crocheting an afghan, happily listening to her radio programs while the Nielsen Audimeter “operates silently and unseen.” Finally the ad presents an illustration of the Nielsen Audimeter’s ticker tape of all of grandma’s radio habits including her “hunting” for channels, 11 minutes of Drama programming on WBBM, 49 minutes of music, sports and news on WGN, and 13 minutes of “story” on WMAQ. McLuhan quips that this device is the marketing genius’ counterpart to the “secret microphone installed for political reasons. It is the mechanical sleuth which eventually pieces together the radio habits of a household into a single chart-image” (48). This ad not only represents media selling itself to consumers, but demonstrates media’s informational gathering operation. The record of grandma’s radio habits of course will be used to develop more specific content and programming to beam into grandma’s house, the ultimate result of which is to better sell advertisements to consumers.

A decade and a half later, Guy Debord published *The Society of the Spectacle*. His realizations were similar to those of 1951 McLuhan. However Debord both phrased his work differently and wrote in an altogether “darker” voice than the somewhat cagey or ironic McLuhan. While McLuhan (seemed) to revel in modern advertising, later going on to appear on multiple television programs and garner high consulting fees from some of the largest

corporations in the world, Debord's work would find itself move off the page and onto the graffiti'd streets of the 1968 student riots (Harold 4-6).

The Society of the Spectacle is comprised of 221 theses or tracts that altogether describe the various social, psychological, political and economic conditions that give rise to a type of culture that produces (and is produced by) what Debord understands as "The Spectacle." The first four theses are below:

1. The whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation.

2. Images detached from every aspect of life merge into a common stream, and the former unity of life is lost forever. Apprehended in a partial way, reality unfolds in a new generality as a pseudo world apart, solely as an object of contemplation. The tendency toward the specialization of images-of-the-world finds its highest expression in the world of the autonomous image, where deceit deceives itself. The spectacle in its generality is a concrete inversion of life, and, as such, the autonomous movement of non-life.

3. The spectacle appears at once as society itself, as a part of society and as a means of unification. As a part of society, it is that sector where all attention, all consciousness, converges. Being isolated — and precisely for that reason — this sector is the locus of illusion and false consciousness; the unity it imposes is merely the official language of generalized separation.

4. The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.

Mcluhan and Debord link up most forcefully along the first and fourth theses. Mcluhan describes modern, technological man's world as a constructed environment, built primarily by advertising and media. His work in *The Mechanical Bride* dealt not simply with images, but with the sub-text and the "folklore" that the image driven advertisements produced and drew inspiration from. Modern man experiences his existence mediated by advertising, films and radio. It is not a coincidence that much of the advertisements Mcluhan examines create a nostalgic atmosphere; the ads construct a type of experience that all of its readers are familiar with, can align with their

own personal histories, and can share with other members of their society. The Spectacle, as instantiated through, for example, these nostalgic advertisements, creates an illusory and false sort of mental space, in order to sell products that only get their real value through the illusions attached to them through branding.

Debord and the situationists (the avant-garde group the writer aligned himself with in the 50s and 60s) do offer prescriptive action to act against The Spectacle. For our purposes the most important is the act of *détournement*, translated as “detour, diversion, hijacking, embezzlement, corruption or misappropriation (Harold 7). These detours in the 1960s took the forms of graffiti, “remixing” popular cultural iconography, or creative writing and satirical essays. They share many of the same strategies and tactics of deconstruction, often working directly in the streets and on the advertisements and communication platforms that they sought to detour. One important notion is that to the situationists it is not simply enough to tell The Spectacle “no,” to negate The Spectacle’s message by insisting upon the contrary; rather, they wished to subvert The Spectacles message by turning that message against itself using the original message’s tropes and design (Harold 7-8). For example, Debord produced a film of the same name of his book, reading his text in a lengthy monologue over found and appropriated image and movies from popular culture and newsreels. He was diverting the original, intended meaning of the films and pieces of The Spectacle by remixing them to his own ends.

Harold points out that various products of *détournement* might be consumed and appropriated by The Spectacle itself. She offers as example the 2002 video game *State of Emergency*; this PlayStation game depicts players as rioters or riot police in a simulated environment that eerily looks like the 1968 Paris riots, or the more contemporary WTO 1999 riots. The original, authentic revolutionary act of the riots has been transformed into a product of The Spectacle, to be sold and consumed as a vicarious image. Any acts against The Spectacle, if

amplified loudly enough to a large enough audience, risk becoming just another fracturing image of The Spectacle.

We find contemporary artists and activists engaged in practices similar to 1960's *détournement*. The first example is Barbara Kruger, whose typographical work is informed by her previous work as an editorial designer for Conde Nast magazines. Kruger's work *looks* like what we consider "advertising," with its various design and type decisions, but it very obviously is critiquing advertising and big media's general consumerist goals. Her work variously declares, "I Shop therefore I am" and "Its all about me, I mean you, I mean me" while helping to sell magazines which sustain themselves through advertising. Kruger admits that "One thing I learned working at magazines was that if you couldn't get people to look at a page or a cover, then you were fired. It was all about how you create arresting works, and by arresting I mean stop people, even for a nano-second" (Kruger Interview). She knows how to play by The Spectacles rules even as she critiques it. In the same interview she is asked "How the language of advertising will still be channeled into our consciousness and define us," and she responds, "I think that's already there on a certain level. I don't think it's subliminal so much though – it doesn't have to be anymore. As subjects, the readers and lookers are far more passive than they used to be, so it can be forthright and people will just do it. I think the big challenge is whether it's possible for young people today, or even older people, to experience the world without looking through a lens or looking at a screen." This statement here begs the question, is there a world that is not mediated by a screen, by a lens, or by a collection of images re-presented to us by The Spectacle.

John Carpenter's 1988 cult film *They Live!* stars Roddy "Rowdy" Piper (of professional wrestling fame) as a drifter who accidentally discovers a pair of sunglasses that allow him to see the "real" message being transmitted by advertising and media. The messages are being

distributed by aliens who have, from behind the scenes, conquered earth through paying off their human collaborators. The graphical similarities between *They Live!* and Kruger's work are striking; one part of The Spectacle feeds and informs other parts. In the film advertisements for consumer products, when viewed through the magic glasses, reveal their true, simple messages to “CONSUME, SLEEP, OBEY, REPRODUCE, CONFORM, STAY ASLEEP.” Forty years after *The Mechanical Bride* a (relatively) mainstream movie is proffering McLuhan's original thesis. *They Live!* makes explicit the McLuhanian notion that advertising's real message is “to keep everybody in the helpless state engendered by prolonged mental rutting,” to buy products, stay asleep and conform.

Adbusters Magazine (and its *Media Foundation*) is an activist publication that seeks to short-circuit The Spectacle. It claims to be the “Journal of the mental environment” and is filled with various articles on media, design and politics. It produces various parody advertisements it calls “subvertisements,” and its Media Foundation has tried with little success to publish these campaigns on various mainstream media outlets and television stations (Lasn 30-33). These subvertisements are 21st century *détournements* in that they use the same design, format and graphics of the corporations they are trying to subvert, however with inverted and at times ironic messages. For example the subvertisement for “Joe Chemo” makes “explicit the easy link between cigarette smoking and cancer...performing a kind of rhetorical jujitsu, using the power of the tobacco giant against itself” (Harold 36-37). Other examples of subversive maneuvers against The Spectacle offered by *Adbusters* include the international campaigns “Buy Nothing Day” (which takes place on the consumer orgiastic Black Friday) and “Turn Your TV Off for a Week.” Both of these campaigns were ostensibly organized by *Adbusters*, but later turned into (seemingly) grassroots movements. They are both different from traditional boycotts against specific organizations or corporations, in that they seek to boycott the entirety of the consumer-

media Spectacle. *Adbusters* “Buy Nothing Day” campaign was unanimously rejected airtime by all of the major television networks. NBC said that the Buy Nothing Day ad was “inimical to our legitimate business interests,” CBS claimed that they “don’t sell airtime for issue ads because that would allow the people with the financial resources to control public policy,” as well as describing the ad as being “in opposition to the current economic policy in the United States” (Lasn 32-33).

Someone from *Adbusters*, or McLuhan himself, would of course counter the major network’s admonishments by pointing out that corporate advertisements themselves are actively and productively creating “public policy.” Further, where the line between “news” and “advertising” really is drawn is suspect. My interview with Justin Burton, a news assignment editor for a Portland television station, revealed how the news media and advertising were inextricably linked. Local or national news affiliates are financed through advertising, and the networks and news outlets create “content” that is interspersed between advertisements. Further, his news station has its own in house production department that can produce commercials for local businesses. Burton points out that “the whole purpose of the news is to report objectively and inform people,” but recognizes how the relationship between sales and stories has the potential to make that objectivity “cloudy.”

Adbusters does not have universal support among the various guerrilla artists and activists working to subvert The Spectacle. The Billboard Liberation Front cheekily describes *Adbusters* as “run by Media Studies hacks and design student interns who dream of running to a comfy agency job the minute the bill from Miami Ad School comes (<http://www.billboardliberation.com/2007/08/14/completely-unfocused/>).” The BLF sees *Adbusters*, with their sleek design, expensive production and hip anti-establishment ethic as being too closely aligned with The Spectacle. In McLuhan’s jargon, *Adbusters*’ and the

advertisements they parody or subvert are both instantiations of the same media. It makes no difference if they are selling cigarettes or selling the dangers of cigarettes, both institutions are part of the same all-encompassing media environment. They are both producing magazines, or television commercials, and the total environmental effects of each are the same.

The BLF's manifesto (<http://www.billboardliberation.com/manifesto.html>) claims that the Ad is now king, philosopher and god:

It is now clear that the Ad holds the most esteemed position in our cosmology.... Advertising suffuses all corners of our waking lives; it so permeates our consciousness that even our dreams are often indistinguishable from a rapid succession of TV commercials...Entirely new media have been invented solely to streamline the process of bringing the Ad to the people...You can switch off/smash/shoot/hack or in other ways avoid Television, Computers and Radio. You are not compelled to buy magazines or subscribe to newspapers."

However, the one "ubiquitous and inescapable" method of advertising is the Billboard; their manifesto claims that their "ultimate goal is nothing short of a personal and singular Billboard for each citizen," and until such a day they "will continue to do all in our power to their own design." Thus their website logs images of re-appropriated, commandeered, remixed, vandalized and altered billboards. Instead of using print or televised media to make advertisements that look identical to the objects of their *détournement*, with just an altered message, they use the ready made and invasive billboard to make entirely new messages. Their billboard liberations range from removing pieces of text from the billboard to change their meaning to painting entirely different scenes unrelated to the original ad.

Even if one argues that the effects of an all consuming culturally constructed media and advertisement based world is not necessarily "negative" or "bad," one must concede that *recognizing* the built media world is a positive. That is to say, one might accept the premise that our 20th and 21st century world is all consumed (and produced) by media, but reject the argument that follows that individuals living (and being actively formed) by such a society is

inherently detrimental. It might just turn out that the benefits of consumer goods, entertainment programming and instant news media might outweigh the detrimental effects of turning the entire world into a stage for selling these things to ourselves. However, it is more likely the case that such a world limits creativity, stifles imagination, and creates relationships among people and their environments that are hollow, soulless, and that have always already been programmed into a screen or on an ad. That is to say, the advertised, mediated world has created artificial limits on how people think and react, and these limits are primarily driven by consumer market demands.

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Advertisements & Media via Marshall McLuhan

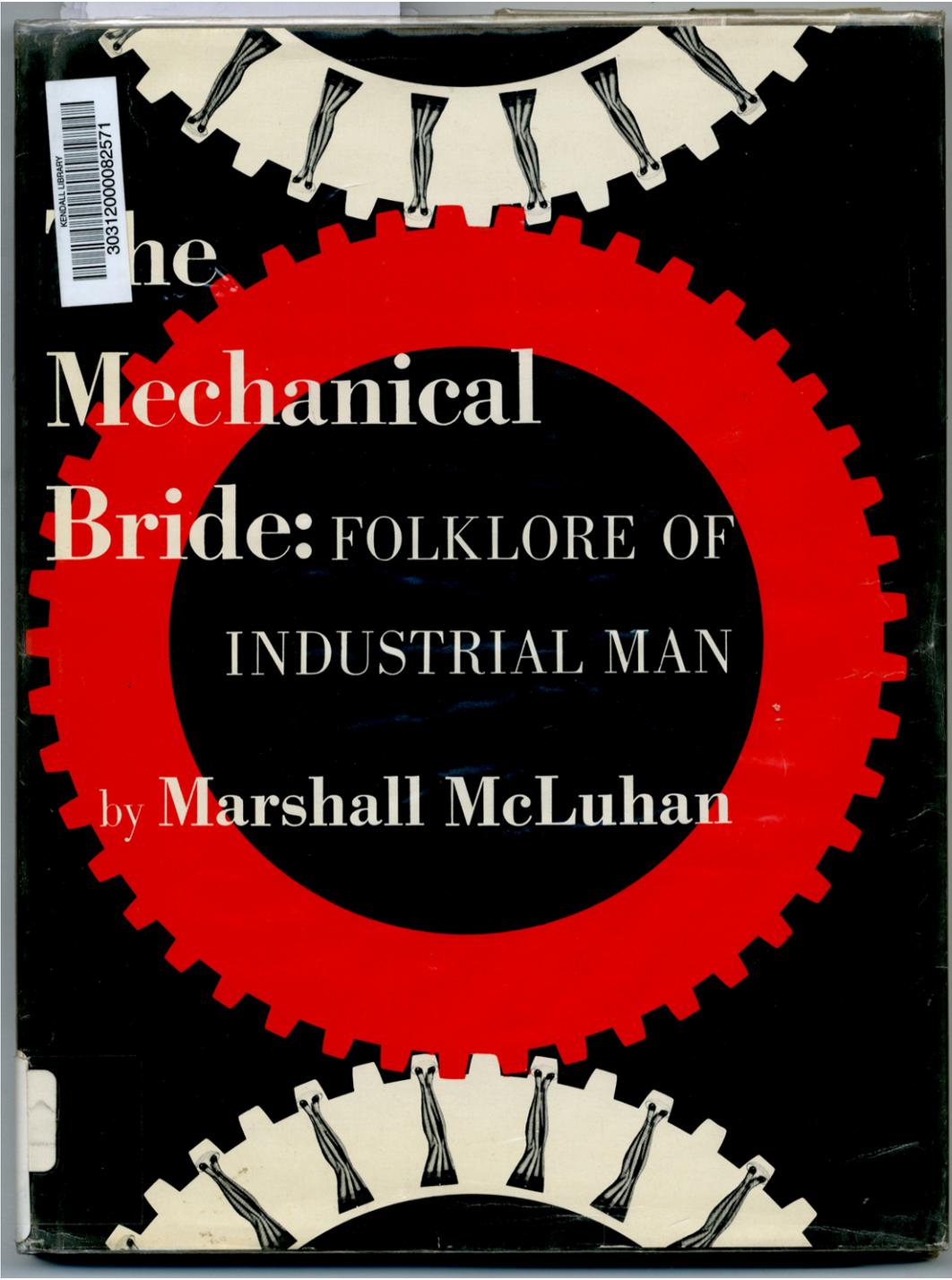
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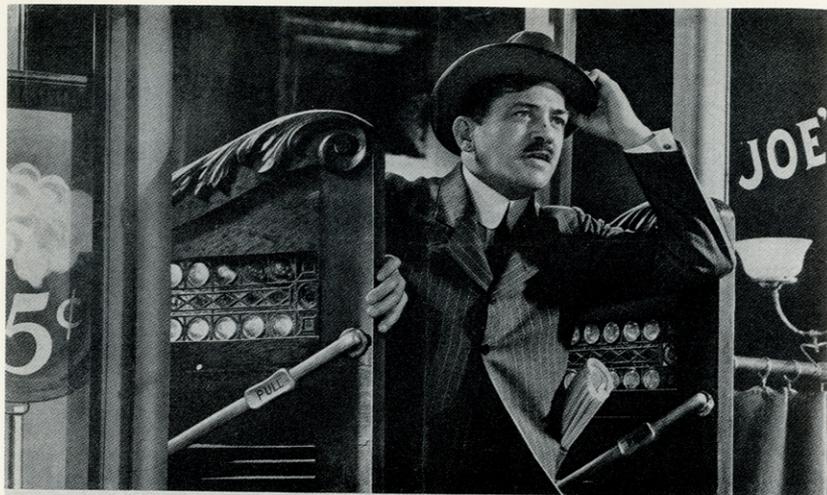
The

Mechanical

**Bride: FOLKLORE OF
INDUSTRIAL MAN**

by **Marshall McLuhan**





A nose for news— and a stomach for whiskey

THE CITY ROOM knows him no more.

He has passed on to some private and personal Nirvana of his own, where every typewriter has all its keys and a bottle waits at every four-alarm fire.

And the only epitaph he would have wished is this... "He was a good reporter."

His greatest, and most unconscious, characteristic was an insatiable curiosity. He seethed with questions. Nothing was as it seemed, and he picked frantically at surface facts until the shell broke and the muck, or the treasure, underneath was exposed to his greedy mind.

With or without the vine leaves in his hair, his sense of news verged on the occult. He knew bishops and gunmen, politicians and pickpockets, and treated both the great and the sham with the same casual impertinence. His mind was a brimming pool of assorted facts, which he turned on and off like a tap.

Under a glass-hard exterior, he had a heart as soft as mush. He rooted fiercely for the underdog, perhaps because he was so much the underdog himself.

He got paid very little—and when other people talked of the "profession of journalism" his was the loudest laugh.

Sometimes he grew out of it. Sometimes he became a famous columnist, a noted author, or even an Editor. But mostly he grew old at 45. And when he saw a new youngster in the City Room he figured the best thing he could do was to take him across the street and say to him: "Kid, what the hell are you doing around here? Get out of it. It's a lousy business..."

But the youngster never took his advice. Year after year thousands of new youngsters decided there was only one thing in the world they wanted to be—a newspaperman. And the American press grew up.

The old-time reporter has passed from the scene.

But he left behind him a legacy of incalculable value to the nation. For he established the tradition of good reporting as the foundation of a free press.

What happened? Who did it? Where? When? Why?

As long as these questions can be asked by good reporters free to write the truest and frankest answers they can find, freedom will have survived.

True, since the days of the old-time reporter, both men and minds have changed. The reporter of today is a better man than his predecessor. He has to be. He is better-educated, better-paid. Neither he nor his editor can get away with the cheap sensationalism of yesterday's Yellow Journalism—and neither of them insists on any special license to get drunk. The reporter's passport today is respected everywhere, and he is expected to live up to the code of his profession.

Too, America's appetite for news has grown sharper. It takes some 25,000 local reporters and 1,888 daily newspapers to gratify it. Altogether, 300,000 men and women are engaged in telling you what is happening in the world, with all the trimmings you're accustomed to—comic strips, women's pages, photographs, society notes, advice to the lovelorn, columnists, cartoons, editorials, crossword puzzles.

But whatever the extra values newspapers and magazines may offer today, one thing remains the same... the heart of a free press is still the good reporter. It is still the man with the nose for news, as peculiar and authentic a possession as the eye of a painter or the ear of a musician.

Perhaps good reporting is the reason, above all other reasons, why the News magazine has come to occupy such a high place in the brain and heart of the nation.

For the News magazine has, as grist for its weekly mill, all that has been found out by all the world's good reporters. Sometimes these good reporters are TIME's own correspondents or legmen. Sometimes they work for one of the great Press Associations. Sometimes they are obscure people whose nuggets have been buried on page 10 of some little-read publication. Sometimes they are men and women in TIME's home-office, who—at one end of a wire—probe a reporter three hundred or three thousand miles away until a few confused facts become a well-ordered, living story.

The world is the good reporter's hunting ground. No man can tell where a nose for news may pick up the scent. Stories may break in the White House, the Holland tunnel, the Balkans, the South Pole, Number 10 Downing Street, or 1913 Central Avenue, South Beach.

No man can anticipate TIME's stories. The News magazine is as unpredictable as the warring, struggling, cresting, cock-eyed human race, whose history it is. Only this is certain...

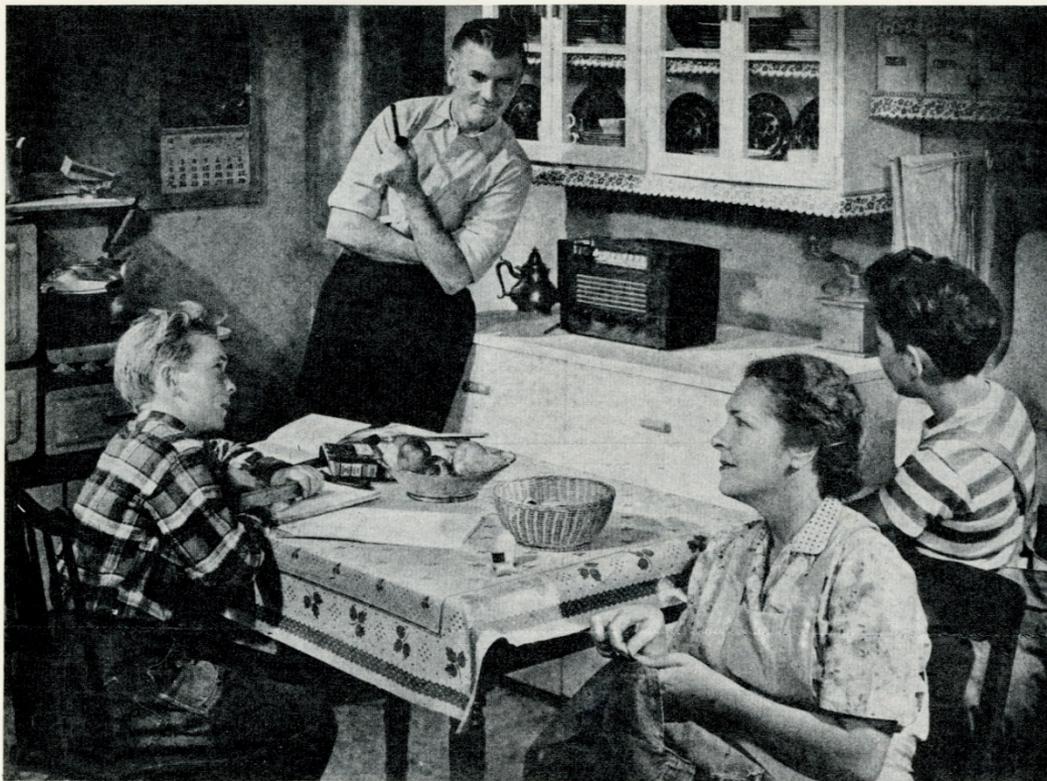
In today's world the true adventures of your fellow humans, gathered and told by good reporters, make more absorbing reading than anything in the world of make-believe.

This is one of a series of advertisements in which the Editors of TIME hope to give all its readers of LIFE a clearer picture of the world of news-gathering, news-writing, and news-reading—and the part TIME plays in helping you to grasp, measure, and use the history of your lifetime as you live the story of your life.



TIME

— THE WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE —



"Our American concept of radio is that it is of the people and for the people"

Freedom to LISTEN - Freedom to LOOK

As the world grows smaller, the question of international communications and world understanding grows larger. The most important phase of this problem is *Freedom to Listen* and *Freedom to Look*—for all peoples of the world.

Radio, by its very nature, is a medium of mass communication; it is a carrier of intelligence. It delivers ideas with an impact that is powerful... Its essence is freedom—liberty of thought and of speech.

Radio should make a prisoner of no man and it should make no man its slave. No one should

be forced to listen and no one compelled to refrain from listening. Always and everywhere, it should be the prerogative of every listener to turn his receiver off, of his own free will.

The principle of *Freedom to Listen* should be established for all peoples without restriction or fear. This is as important as *Freedom of Speech* and *Freedom of the Press*.

Television is on the way and moving steadily forward. Television fires the imagination, and the day is foreseen when we shall look around the earth from city to city, and nation to nation,

as easily as we now listen to global broadcasts. Therefore, *Freedom to Look* is as important as *Freedom to Listen*, for the combination of these will be the radio of the future.

The "Voice of Peace" must speak around this planet and be heard by all people everywhere, no matter what their race, or creed, or political philosophies.*

David Sarnoff

President and Chairman of the Board,
Radio Corporation of America.

*Excerpts from an address before the United States National Commission for UNESCO.



RADIO CORPORATION of AMERICA

FREEDOM IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

Know-How

As THE ad implies, know-how is at once a technical and a moral sphere. It is a duty for a woman to love her husband and also to love that soap that will make her husband love her. It is a duty to be glamorous, cheerful, efficient, and, so far as possible, to run the home like an automatic factory. This ad also draws attention to the tendency of the modern housewife, after a premarital spell in the business world, to embrace marriage and children but not housework. Emotionally, she repudiates physical tasks with the same conviction that she pursues hygiene. And so the ad promises her a means of

How much more Know-How is needed to make human life obsolete?

Is there any known gadget for controlling a rampant Know-How?

The lady in the ad has found a mechanical substitute for moral choice?

King Midas knew how to change everything into gold. Where did all that popcorn come from?

32



Let the Gladiron show you

How to iron shirts without hating your husband!



Operates automatically at the touch of a single knee control.

You'll Love Him and Your GLADIRON When You Sit and Iron Shirts — in 4½ Minutes — Flatwork in Less Than 2 Minutes



Compare the Gladiron Feature for Feature With Any Other Ironer

- * Full size... yet folds and wheels where you want it. Stores in a closet
- * Single knee control operation!
- * Efficient exclusive electric roll makes hand-ironing shirts easy.
- * More heat and pressure per square inch than any other ironer... beautiful finish instantly.
- * Automatically controlled heat for each fabric... just set the Dialostat.

Thor Company's Price... only \$9950

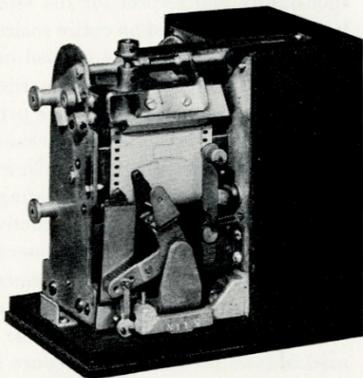
The Gladiron's special roll does the trick! Fits inside sleeves, just like a sleeve board, so ironing of shirts, dresses, even children's clothes is amazingly fast and easy. You just sit and whisk clothes through, have both hands free for guiding. The Gladiron is automatic... starts, stops, opens and closes at the touch of a single knee control. See the One-Minute Shirt Demonstration at your Thor dealer's today. You'll never go back to slaving over an ironing board!



Thor's AUTOMATIC GLADIRON

THOR CORPORATION
Chicago 30, Illinois
Thor Canadian Company, Ltd., Toronto, Canada
Branches in Chicago, Illinois; Bloomington, Illinois; El Monte, California; Fort Worth, Texas; London, England

THE NIELSEN AUDIMETER



... the graphic recording instrument installed in a radio receiver in a scientifically selected radio home. By recording every twist of the dial, every minute of the day or night, the Audimeter obtains precious radio data not available through any other means. Audimeters are of 3 different types (only one illustrated here).

Figure 4



Figure 5

Installed in a typical radio receiver—the Audimeter operates silently and unseen.

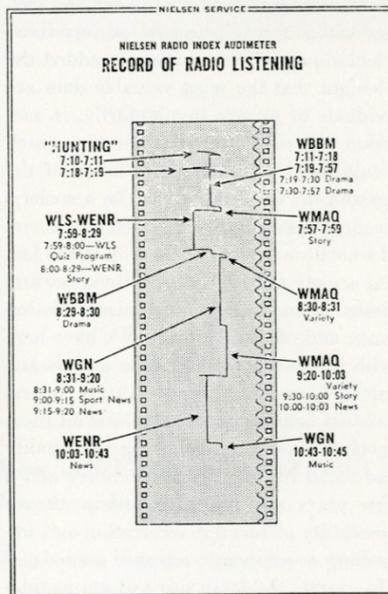
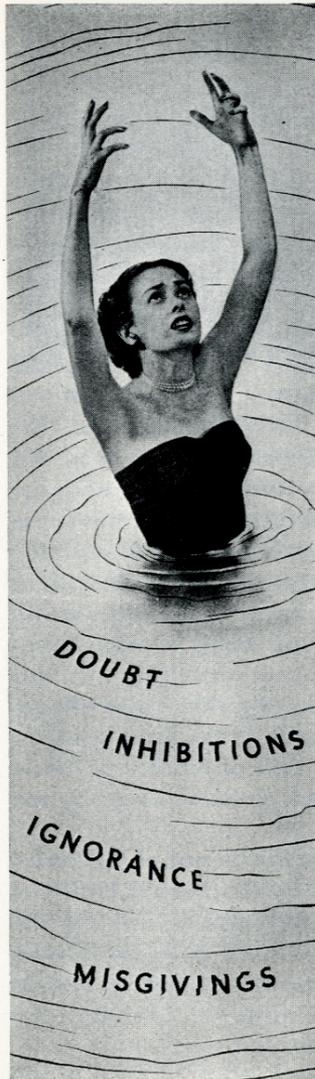


Figure 6



TOO LATE TO CRY OUT IN ANGUISH!

**Beware of the one intimate
neglect that can
engulf you in marital grief**

TOO LATE, when love has gone, for a wife to plead that no one warned her of danger. Because a wise, considerate wife makes it her business to *find out* how to safeguard her daintiness in order to protect precious married love and happiness.

One of the soundest ways for a wife to keep married love in bloom is to achieve dainty allure by practicing *effective* feminine hygiene such as *regular* vaginal douches with reliable "Lysol."

Germs destroyed swiftly

"Lysol" has amazing, *proved* power to kill germ-life on contact . . . truly cleanses the vaginal canal even in the presence of mucous matter. Thus "Lysol" *acts* in a way that makeshifts like soap, salt or soda *never can*.

Appealing daintiness is assured, because the very source of objectionable odors is eliminated.

Use whenever needed!

Gentle, non-caustic "Lysol" will not harm delicate tissue. Easy directions give correct douching solution. Many doctors advise their patients to douche regularly with "Lysol" brand disinfectant, just to insure daintiness alone, and to use it as often as they need it. No greasy aftereffect.

For feminine hygiene, three times more women use "Lysol" than any other liquid preparation. No other is more reliable. You, too, can rely on "Lysol" to help protect your married happiness . . . keep you desirable!

For complete Feminine
Hygiene rely on . . .

"Lysol"
Brand Disinfectant

**A Concentrated
Germ-Killer**

Product of Lehn & Fink



NEW! . . . FEMININE HYGIENE FACTS!

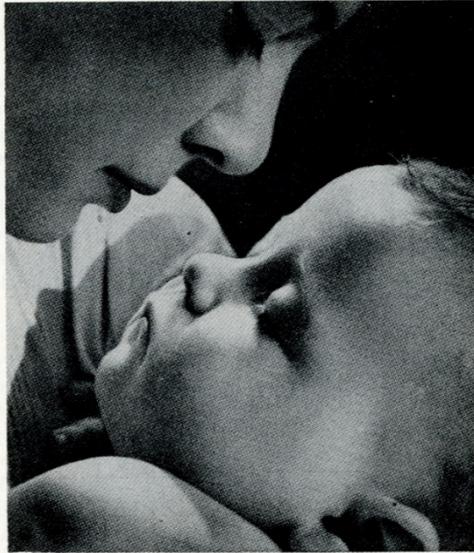
FREE! New booklet of information by leading gynecological authority. Mail coupon to Lehn & Fink, 192 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield, N. J.

Name

Street

City State

D.M.-4911



I dream of
LOOKING UP *to my son...*

I see him one day as a man of stature... a new-world man
 towering free and confident in an untroubled generation.

I WILL HELP HIM GROW IN STATURE... by giving him care which
 will add inches to his height, help him form straight, sturdy limbs,
 build a back as erect as a great tree, and develop a mighty chest.

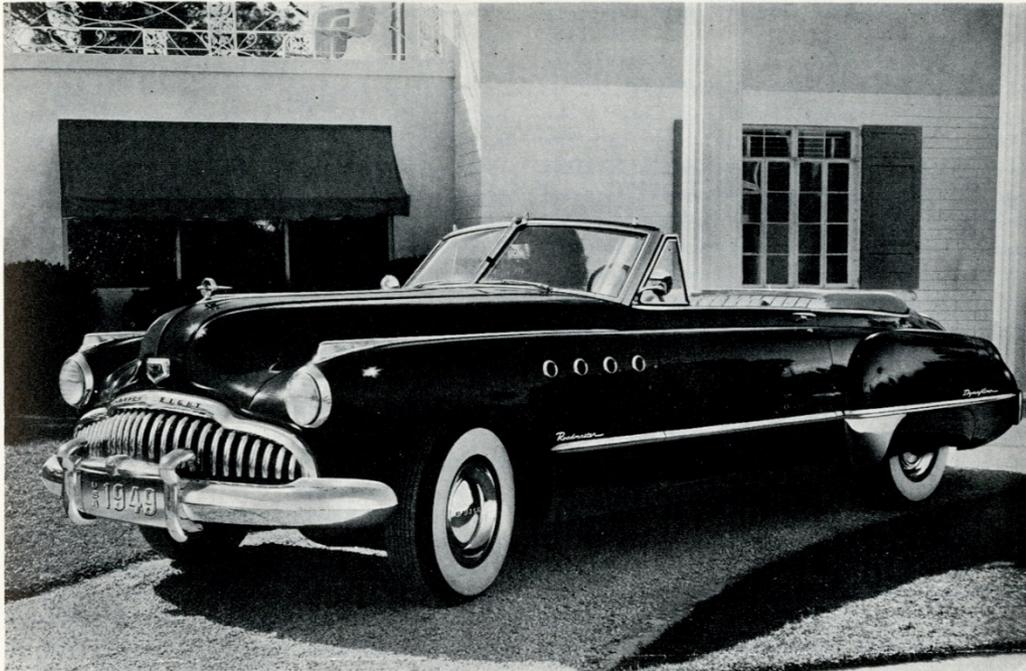
This dream I will make come true!

A SECRET TO GREATER HEIGHT. To be certain that *your* baby gets enough of a critical element needed for growing bones... and to make them hard and sound... give him Squibb Cod Liver Oil daily. Squibb's will supply the Vitamin D so essential to help your baby reach his full height, and to help build a *well-shaped head, a fine, full chest, straight legs, a strong back, and sound teeth.* It also provides Vitamin A. Get Squibb's for your baby!

One-half of his full stature attained at the age of two!
 Because a baby attains over 50% of his height by the end of the second year, it's of greatest importance to supply enough Vitamin D—by giving Squibb Cod Liver Oil regularly every day!



SQUIBB *cod liver oil*
a name you can trust



White sidewall tires, as illustrated, available at extra cost.

YOUR KEY TO  GREATER VALUE

Ready, Willing - and Waiting

ONLY one thing is needed to complete this picture.

For the day is bright, as you can see.

The top's down on this tidy Buick Convertible, all ready to let in the wind and the soft, warm air.

Under its bonnet, 150 Fireball horsepower wait the touch of a toe that gives them smooth and quiet-voiced life.

Beneath the floor boards, a modern miracle in engineering called Dynaflo Drive is ready to take shifting off your mind—and put satiny smoothness in all your going.

The seats are wide, deep and restful. Handy controls run windows up or down, adjust the front seat to your comfort, swing the top up at command. A deep-seated frame, big billowy tires and gentle coil spring-

ing assure a ride that's like a dream.

In short, here are all the makings of a grand time—except for one thing.

That's you.

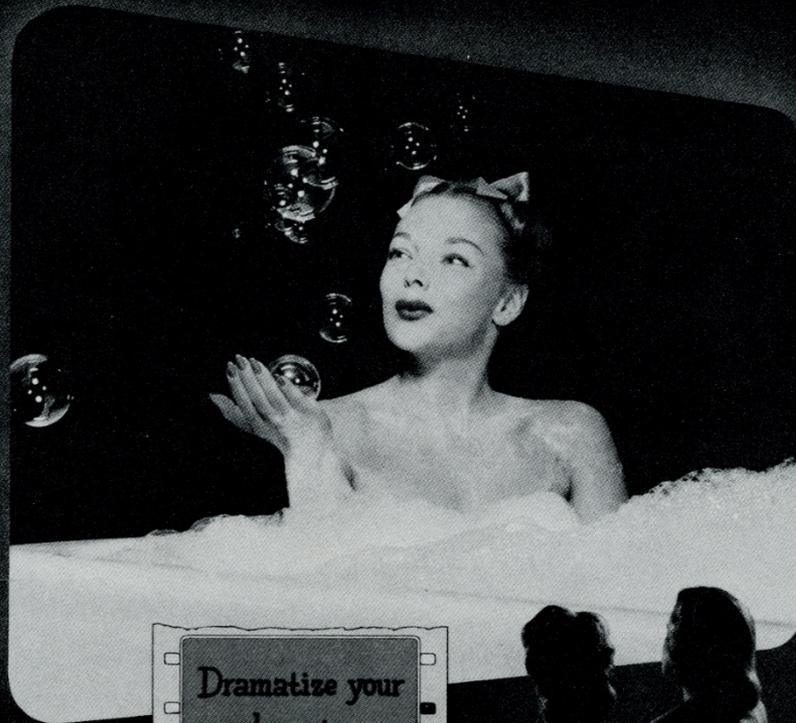
To step into this picture, why not step down now to your Buick dealer—see what a whale of a buy this Buick is—find out the happy news about deliveries—and get a firm order in?

BUICK Division of GENERAL MOTORS

Buick **ROADMASTER** *for '49* with Dynaflo Drive

Tone in HENRY J. TAYLOR, ABC Network, every Monday evening.

When better automobiles are built Buick will build them



Dramatize your
sales story
...with films

Whether soap's your product—or cereal or shoes—it needs a touch of the dramatic to become the people's choice.

To fill this need—and fill it well—you'll find the most effective means in films. They bring real "theater" to a sales presentation... put any product in a bright dramatic light that can hardly fail to win favor.

For films and films alone enable you to tell your sales story within an absorb-

ing plot—with the impact of pictures... color... action... sound. A story that has showmanship—that *sells*.

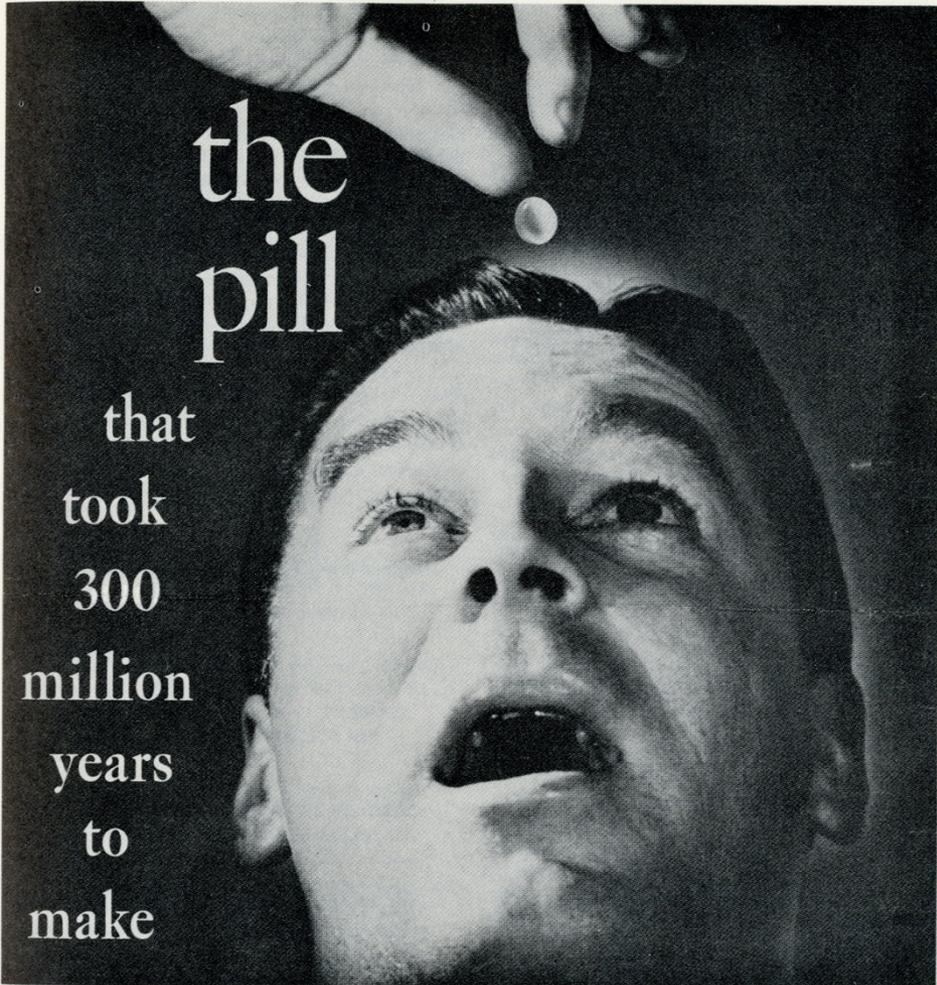
Real need for showmanship today. With more and more products competing for attention, you need a selling medium with dramatic impact—films. And films are ready. Production, projection, and distribution technics were never better... and a commercial film producer is ready to help. Call him in... soon.

Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester 4, N. Y.

Business Films

... another important function
of photography

Kodak



the
pill
that
took
300
million
years
to
make

It began before there were men on earth. A mighty forest was crushed deep into the soil and turned into the substance we call coal. Millions of years later, men learned to extract from coal a tar of many uses. From this tar they derived colorless liquids called quinoline and pyridine, and from these they make a pure white powder which now serves the nutritional needs of people the world over. It is nicotinamide, an important component in the familiar Vitamin B Complex pill.

Barrett's refined coal-tar bases are the source of scores of other medicines, including many of the famous sulfa drugs which have reduced the deadliness of dread diseases. We at Barrett are key suppliers of basic coal-tar chemicals which help you achieve better health and better all-around living.

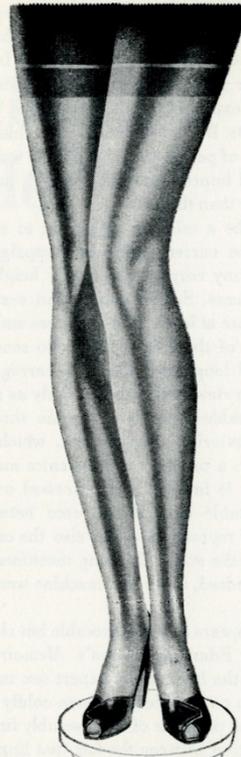
COAL-TAR CHEMICALS—Benzol, toluol, naphthalene, tar acids, tar bases, solvents, Cumar* resins, products for rubber, etc. BUILDING MATERIALS—Barrett Specification* Roofs, Shingles, Siding, Roll Roofings, Waterproofing, Rock Wool Insulation, Bituminous Paints. WOOD PRESERVATIVES—Cresote Oil and Carbosoda*. PAINTING MATERIALS—Tarcia* and Tarva-Lithi*. PROTECTIVE COATINGS—Pipeline Enamel and Waterworks Enamel. NITROGEN PRODUCTS—Anhydrous Ammonia, Sulphate of Ammonia and Arcadian*, the American Nitrate of Soda.

ONE OF AMERICA'S GREAT BASIC BUSINESSES



THE BARRETT DIVISION
ALIED CHEMICAL & DYE CORPORATION
40 Becker Street, New York 6, N. Y.

Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.



ON A PEDESTAL

NYLON
GOTHAM
GOLD STRIPE
THE MOST
BEAUTIFUL STOCKINGS
AT LEADING STORES EVERYWHERE

GOTHAM HOSIERY COMPANY, INC.
280 MADISON AVE., NEW YORK 16, N. Y.
ALSO MANUFACTURED BY
GOTHAM HOSIERY CO. OF CANADA, LTD.



Freedom . . . American Style

IT'S the feeling you have when you get up in the morning and stand at an open window—the way you breathe in God's sunlight and fresh air. It's whistling before breakfast, disagreeing with the bank over your monthly statement, leaving a tip for the waitress if you feel like it.

It's working hard now with the idea of quitting someday. It's living where you like. It's looking forward with confidence—even while you willingly put up with gas rationing — to packing a lunch again and

piling the family in the car for an outing.

It's keeping your car in condition against *that day*. It's realizing this is a nation on wheels that must be kept rolling—and that *your wheels* are part of all the wheels.

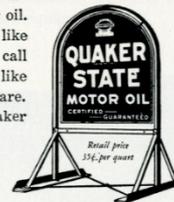
It's an oil company spending more money to make a better motor oil. It's giving that oil a brand name like Quaker State and being able to call it to your attention at a time like this, when your car needs extra care.

It's stating facts—that Quaker

State is refined from Pennsylvania Grade Crude Oil; that it has won for itself, by its performance over the years, a reputation second to none in the field.

It's asking you to *try* Quaker State—in order to care for your car for your country in the best way possible. And, of course, it's your right to disregard this friendly advice if you feel so inclined. That's freedom—American style! Quaker State Oil Refining Corporation, Oil City, Pa.

OIL IS AMMUNITION—USE IT WISELY



Love Novice



In 13.9 Seconds
A Drum Majorette
Can Twirl A
Baton 25 Times
...But In Only

TWO SECONDS

Bayer Aspirin
Is Ready To Go
To Work!



MAKE THIS TEST!

To see how fast it's ready to go to work, drop a Bayer Aspirin tablet in a glass of water and time its disintegrating speed. What happens in the glass, happens in your stomach.



The two most important kinds of relief when you're suffering from an ordinary headache, are *fast* relief and gentle, *dependable* relief. And one thing that gives you *both* is Bayer Aspirin.

Because Bayer Aspirin tablets start disintegrating almost instantly you take them...because they're actually ready to go to work in *two seconds*... they bring relief with amazing speed.

And besides being so *effective* that doctors regularly prescribe it for pain relief, Bayer Aspirin's single active ingredient is so *gentle* to the system that mothers give it even to small children

on their doctors' advice. That's why you can take it with utmost confidence.

So don't experiment with drugs that have not stood the test of time. For *fast*—and *dependable*—pain relief, use Bayer Aspirin. And when you buy, always ask for genuine Bayer Aspirin.

NOW... BAYER ASPIRIN IN CHILDREN'S SIZE

New 2½ grain tablets (containing half the amount of regular size Bayer Aspirin tablets) provide proper children's dosage as prescribed by your doctor... and are made so you can break them in half when even smaller dosages are required. They're neither flavored nor colored, so they cannot be mistaken for candy. 30 Tablets—25¢.

*Because no other pain reliever can match its record of use by millions of normal people, without ill effect, one thing you can take with complete confidence is genuine

BAYER ASPIRIN

Mother Goose is on the loose? Tell the Marines she'll be coming round the mountain.

Who dreamed up that goose-stepping combination of military mechanism and jack-booted eroticism?

Are you there, Sacher-Masoch? Venus recurs not in furs but in uniform?

Say it with footballs and touchdowns?

Ringside Seat for a *Battle Royal!*

**Correct Lubrication Fights
For You Inside Your Diesel
and Throughout Your Plant!**

YOU'RE in the front row, looking at a terrific battle inside a big Diesel engine. Here, heat and oxygen gang together to attack the lubricating oil, shown in red.

This battle royal is typical of similar battles going on constantly inside all the machines in your plant. It points up the tremendous importance of Correct Lubrication to more continuous production, lower maintenance cost, greater over-all efficiency.

Increased net profit for your plant is the goal of the Socony-Vacuum representative who works with your staff.

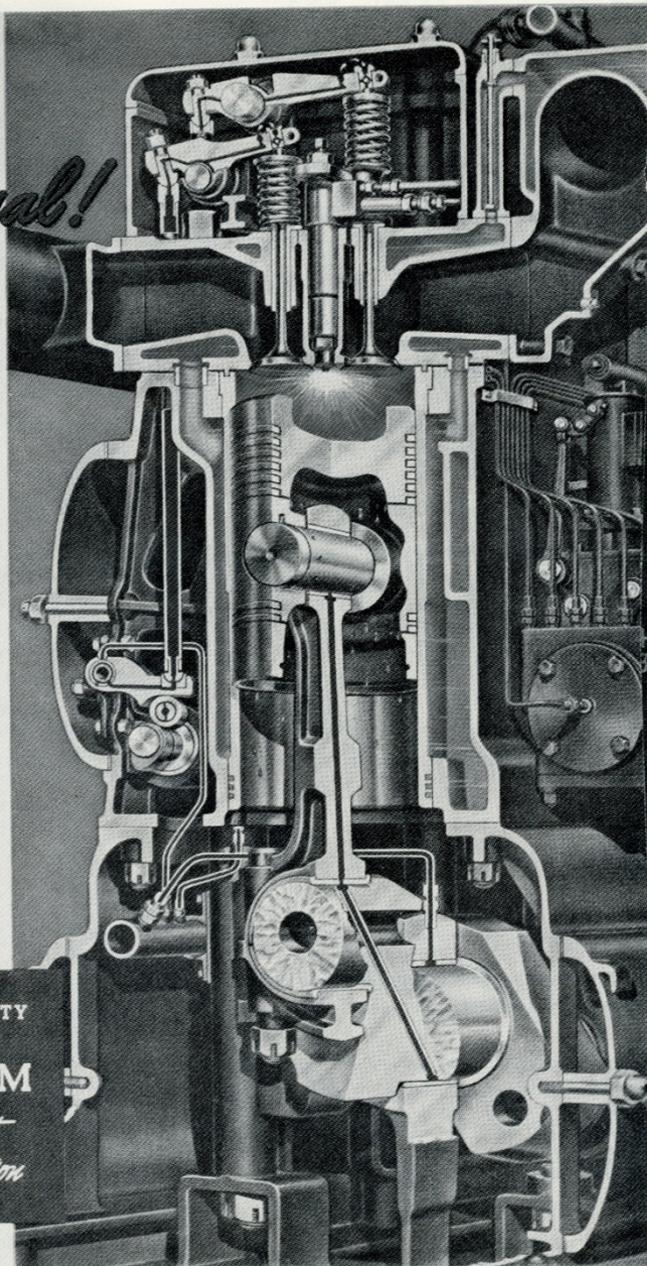
He brings you our 78 years of lubrication experience, *greatest* in the world. He offers complete analysis of all your lubrication requirements and a sound practical Lubrication Plan to assure the application of the *right* oil in the *right* place, in the *right* way. You'll find it pays to have him supply all of your lubrication needs.

SOCONY-VACUUM OIL CO., INC.—Standard Oil of N. Y. Div. • White Star Div. • Lubrite Div. • Chicago Div. • White Eagle Div. • Wadhams Div. • Magnolia Petroleum Co. • General Petroleum Corp. of Calif.

**TO HELP MAINTAIN CAPACITY
PRODUCTION, CALL IN
SOCONY-VACUUM**



*for Correct
Lubrication*





What goes on here?

Referee makes first down — or did he really just miss it? Field judge blocks out the nearest tackler — or was it clipping? If the officials call 'em — and play too — what kind of a game is that?

You wouldn't stand for that sort of thing on a football field — but it happens every day in the electric light and power business. Government not only regulates the electric companies — but is in competition with them at the same time!

The catch is that government sets up two different sets of rules. The government's electric agencies pay little or no interest on the money they borrow, and pay no Federal taxes — but electric companies do, and expect to. When government-in-the-power-business can't make ends meet — it gets a handout of tax money from the U. S. Treasury. Who foots the bill? American taxpayers—of which you are one.

If government can get into the light and power business this way — it can get into every other business the same way.

In sixty-odd years, the self-supporting electric

companies have built for America the most and the best electric service in the world. While costs of everything else are way up (including the costs of making and delivering electricity) electric service is still the best bargain in the American family's budget . . . it does so much, and costs so little.

This is a good record for the thousands of people who work in power companies, and for the millions of people who invest savings in them.

Don't you think these men and women deserve a fair break?

The answer is yours to make, for government money is your money.

It is to your benefit to know the facts about your electric service, and to ours to have you know them. That's why this advertisement is published by America's business-managed, tax-paying ELECTRIC LIGHT AND POWER COMPANIES.*

*Names on request from this magazine.

Hear famous stars in radio's great new dramatic show — THE ELECTRIC THEATRE . . . CBS, Sundays, 9 P. M., EST.



How to make a muscle

Our young friend has growing pains. He yearns to bulge a bicep. Although he doesn't know it, he's quite a man for his age—holds his own on the playground and in the classroom. *And at the dinner table.*

In wealth of food resources, this is a fortunate country.

But using those resources—making the most of them—is where America shows up best. We have good foods because we've learned more about how to grow and process, pack, ship and store them.

Another reason this is the best nourished nation is because we've taken foods apart, isolated their vital elements and applied this

knowledge to feeding babies, growing children, mothers, workers everywhere.

National Dairy has had a large share in the progress of this country in foods, particularly in dairy products like milk, cheese, butter and ice cream. Some of the foods you'll eat today will bear the National Dairy labels shown on this page.

Many of the *new* foods you'll eat tomorrow will bear these labels, too. There is much progress still to be made in feeding America's millions. And National Dairy laboratories are dedicated to this endlessly important job.

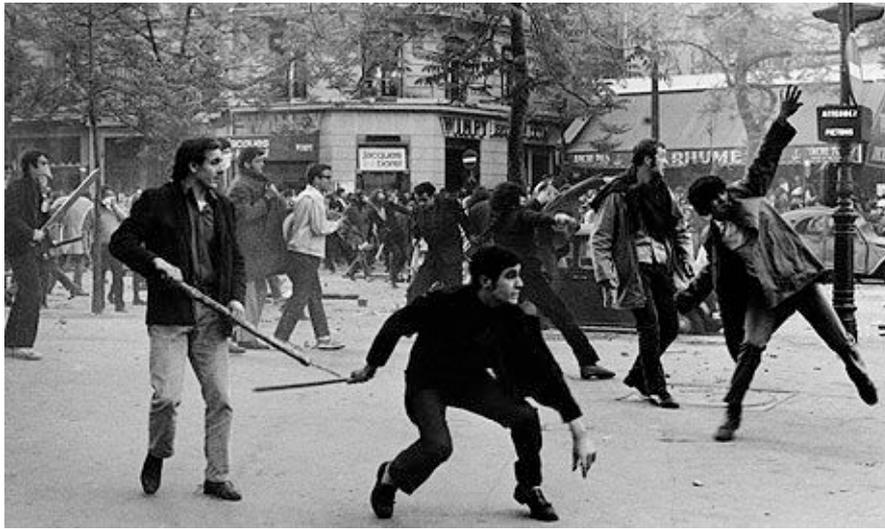
Dedicated to the wider use and better understanding of dairy products as human food . . . as a base for the development of new products and materials . . . as a source of health and enduring progress on the farms and in the towns and cities of America.





SOCIETY **SPECTACLE**
of the

**guy
debord**









I shop
therefore
I am







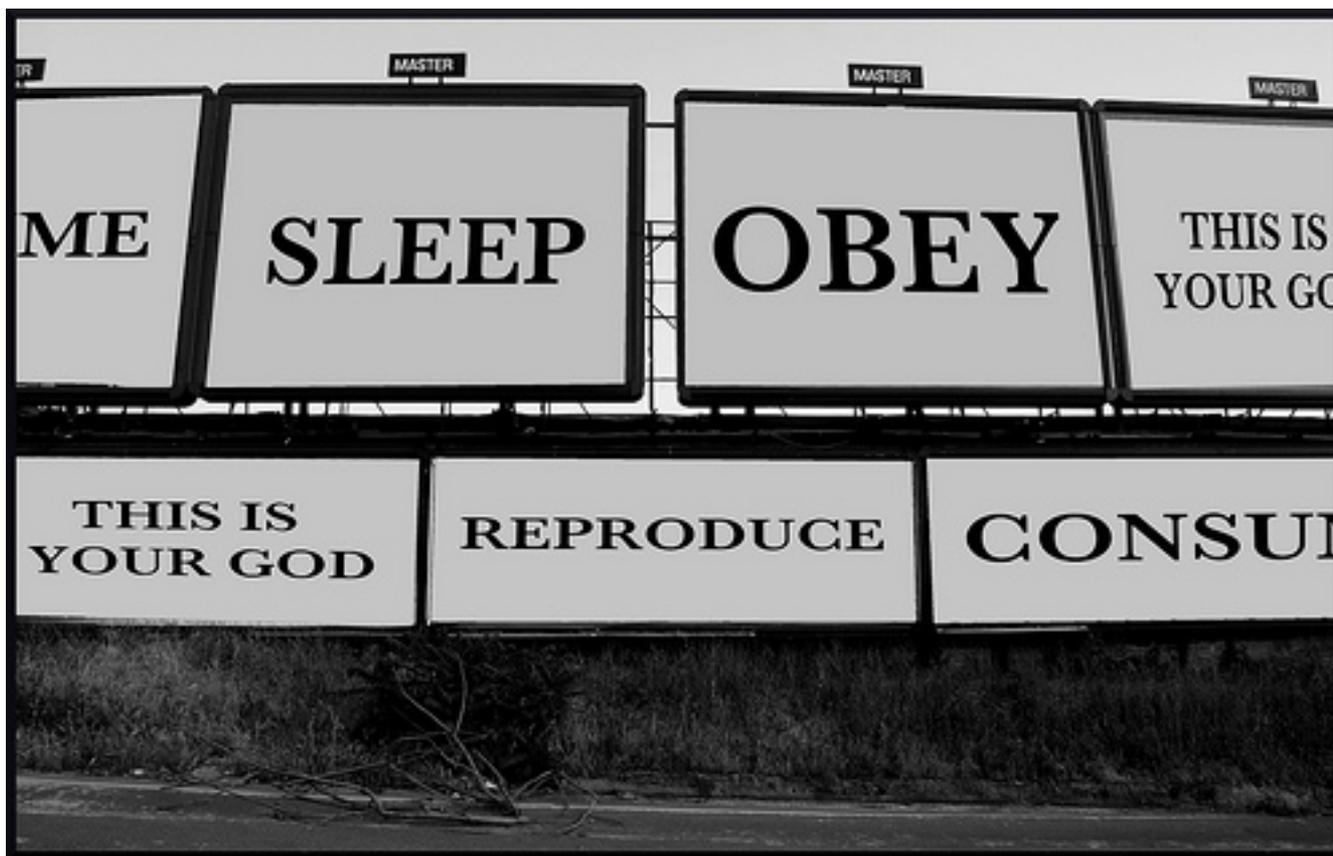
OBEDECE



CONSUME



CONFÓRMATE



DR

MASTER

MASTER

MASTER

ME

SLEEP

OBEY

THIS IS
YOUR GOD

THIS IS
YOUR GOD

REPRODUCE

CONSUME

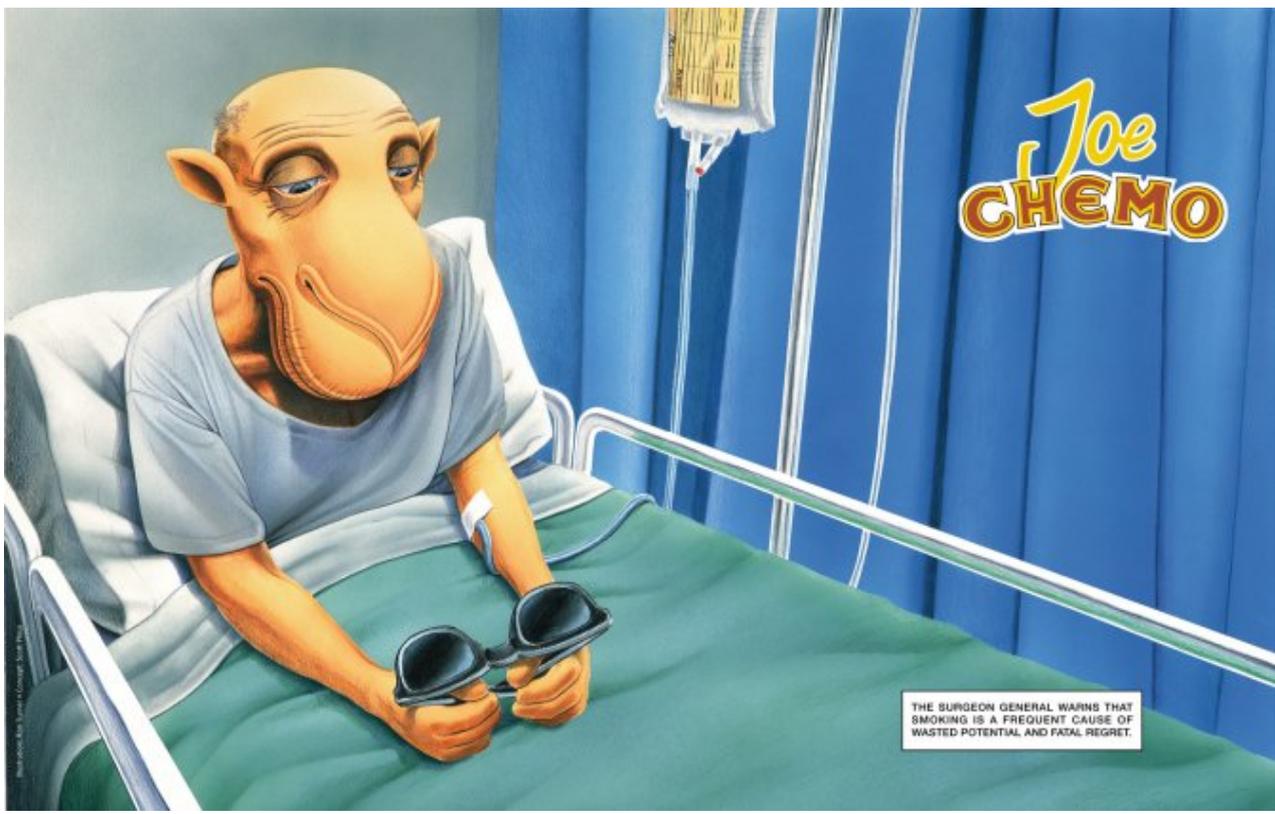
ADBUSTERS

AMERICA

ISSUE
100



ARE WE HAPPY YET?



Joe
CHEMO

THE SURGEON GENERAL WARNS THAT
SMOKING IS A FREQUENT CAUSE OF
WASTED POTENTIAL AND FATAL REGRET.



TOMMY
HILFINGER

Tommy





VIACOM

TO SERVE MAN



LIVE Central London

FTSE 100
5084.7 ▲ +17.9 +0.4%

EUROZONE RESCUE PLAN
Finance ministers reported to be close to a deal

BBC NEWS 11:15 GRACE FOR THE MANNER OF HIS DISMISSAL IN SUP

LIVE

WORLD

BHOPAL LEGACY
Union Carbide plant leaked deadly gas

HEADLINES PRESIDENT THAISSIRAKI ARRIVES IN HONG KONG

Augmented (hyper) Reality: Domestic Robocop